THE HAUNT OF FEAR®

AN ENTERTAINING COMIC

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IN THIS ISSUE:
E.C.'S ADAPTATION OF A STORY BY
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AMERICA'S TOP HORROR WRITER!

FEATURING...

THE OLD WITCH

THE VAULT-KEEPER

THE CRYPT-KEEPER

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THE WITCH'S CAULDRON!

HEE,HEE! SO YOU MANAGED TO SCRATCH UP *ANOTHER* DIME FOR YOUR COPY OF MY *MAD MENU* FROM *THE HAUNT OF FEAR!* WELL, I'VE COOKED UP A RATHER *REVOLTING RECIPE* I'M SURE YOU'LL *RETCH* OVER... SO *COME IN!* THIS IS *THE OLD WITCH*, STIRRING UP HER *GRUDDY CAULDRON*, READY TO DISH OUT ANOTHER *TASTY TALE OF TERROR!* HERE GOES WITH THE *SLIME-SERVING* I CALL ..

NOBODY THERE!

THE THROBBING SOUND FILLED THE LABORATORY, HAMMERING AWAY LIKE THE AMPLIFIED BEAT OF A PULSATING HEART! THE OLD MAN STOOD WITH HIS ARMS FOLDED, A LOOK OF DEFIANCE ON HIS AGED WRINKLED FACE! HE LEERED DOWN AT THE YOUNGER MAN...

ERIC! WHAT ..WHAT DO YOU *MEAN*, YOU'RE *THROUGH?*

THAT'S WHAT I *SAID*.. ALAH! I'M *FINISHED!* I WON'T HAVE ANY MORE TO *DO* WITH THIS- *THIS EVIL!*

ERIC MONORUM, THE AGED BUT STILL FAMOUS SURGEON, STARED AT THE YOUNGER LOOKING ALAN THORKY'S WIDE-EYED FACE...
YES, ALAN! I'M QUITTING! AND YOU... YOU CAN'T DO A THING ABOUT IT! YOU'RE HELPLESS, ALAN! TRAPPED! TRAPPED AS I WAS THAT NIGHT THIRTY-THREE YEARS AGO...
'REMEMBER, ALAN? REMEMBER THAT NIGHT? I WAS TWENTY-NINE, THEN! I WAS YOUNG AND FOOLISH, AND YOU CAPITALIZED ON IT! YOU WAITED OUTSIDE HER DOOR UNTIL I CAME OUT...'
GOOD-NIGHT, ERIC, DARLING! WILL I SEE YOU TOMORROW NIGHT?
IF I CAN GET AWAY, LOUISE! GOOD-NIGHT!
'I LOOKED UP AND DOWN THE HALL...BECAUSE I DIDN'T WANT TO BE SEEN! I NEVER KNEW YOU WERE WATCHING...'
KISS ME, ERIC! JUST ONCE MORE...
HUSH, LOUISE! SOMEONE MAY SEE US!
'YES, ALAN! I DIDN'T WANT TO BE SEEN! YOU KNEW THAT, DIDN'T YOU? YOU KNEW YOU'D BE ABLE TO BLACKMAIL ME...'
HELLO...DOCTOR MONDRUM!
HUH? I...I'M SORRY! YOU'VE MADE A MISTAKE! I'M NOT...
C'MON, DOCTOR! I'D KNOW YOU ANYWHERE! NO USE PRETENDING! WHERE CAN WE GO? I WANT TO TALK TO YOU!
I DON'T KNOW YOU! WHAT WOULD WE HAVE TO TALK ABOUT?
WHY...WE COULD TALK ABOUT YOUR WIFE, DOC! WE COULD TALK ABOUT WHAT SHE WOULD DO IF SHE FOUND OUT ABOUT LOUISE IN THERE!
WHAT DO YOU WANT? MONEY? IS THIS BLACKMAIL?
'AND THEN, ALAN, I NOTICED HOW YOU LIMPED AS YOU WALKED! REMEMBER, ALAN? REMEMBER YOUR CLUB-FOOT?...'
I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU, DOC! I'VE FOLLOWED YOUR FABULOUS CAREER CAREFULLY! GRADUATED MED-SCHOOL AT TWENTY-TWO...MARRIED A RICH SOCIETY DEBUTANTE...AND NOW, A FAMOUS SURGEON!
HOW MUCH DO YOU WANT? NAME YOUR PRICE!

'SMATTER, DOC? SCARED? SCARED THAT A SCANDAL MIGHT RUIN YOUR REPUTATION? YOU LIKE THOSE HIGH FEES YOUR PARK AVENUE PATIENTS FORK OVER, EH? IF YOUR WIFE FOUND OUT ABOUT LOUISE, YOU'D BE KICKED OUT OF THE BLUE-NOSE CROWD...
I HAVE THREE HUNDRED DOLLARS! IT'S YOURS! HERE!
I DON'T WANT YOUR FILTHY DOUGH! I'M NOT AFTER MONEY! I WANT A HEALTHY BODY!
I...I DON'T UNDERSTAND! YOU MEAN YOU WANT ME TO CURE YOUR...YOUR AFFLICTION?
THAT'S WHAT I MEAN, DOC! I WANT TO WALK LIKE NORMAL PEOPLE...LOOK LIKE NORMAL PEOPLE...
I'LL...I'LL HAVE TO EXAMINE YOU! I DON'T KNOW WHETHER I CAN DO ANYTHING FOR YOUR FOOT!
YOU CAN'T! IT'S INCURABLE! BUT THERE IS A WAY FOR ME TO BE ABLE TO WALK...A REVOLUTIONARY WAY! SOMETHING THAT'S NEVER BEEN DONE WITH HUMAN BEINGS BEFORE!
I...I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
'AND THEN YOU TOLD ME, ALAN, YOU TOLD ME YOUR MAD SCHEME...'
NO! NO! OH, LORD, NO! I WON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH IT...
OKAY, DOC! SUIT YOURSELF! EITHER THAT...OR YOUR WIFE FINDS OUT ABOUT LOUISE!
'YOUR PLAN SICKENED ME, ALAN! BUT I WAS TRAPPED! SO I AGREED! I HAD TO...'
NOW YOU'RE ACTING SMART, DOC! YOU GET THE EQUIPMENT SET UP...AND I'LL BE AT YOUR OFFICE IN AN HOUR!
WHERE...WHERE WILL YOU GET HIM?
THAT'S MY BUSINESS, DOC! AT YOUR OFFICE...IN AN HOUR!
AS...AS YOU WISH!
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'YES, ALAN! I WAS TRAPPED! TRAPPED... AND FRIGHTENED! I WENT TO MY OFFICE-LABORATORY AND NERVOUSLY PREPARED THE EQUIPMENT...'
LET'S SEE! RUBBER HOSE... CLAMPS... OXYGEN... GASP...
R-R-RINNNG!
I WENT TO THE DOOR AND OPENED IT! YOU STOOD THERE... THE YOUTH IN YOUR ARMS...
HE'S UNCONSCIOUS! I CHLOROFORMED HIM! HELP ME GET HIM INSIDE!
Y-YES! OF -- COURSE!
'AND THEN, I DID IT! I PERFORMED THAT HORRIBLE OPERATION! IT WAS ALMOST DAWN WHEN YOU CLIMBED DOWN FROM THE TABLE...'
HOW... HOW DO YOU FEEL?
SLIGHT HEADACHE! THAT'S ABOUT ALL!
'YOU LOOKED DOWN AT YOUR NOW-HEALTHY BODY AND YOU LAUGHED...'
I TOLD YOU IT WOULD WORK, MONDRUM! I TOLD YOU!
HEAVEN FORGIVE ME!
'AND THEN YOU WENT AWAY! I PRAYED I'D NEVER SEE YOU AGAIN! OH, THE NIGHTMARES I HAD... TRYING TO FORGET THAT HORRIBLE THING I'D DONE...'
NO! NO! NO! I... HUH?
ERIC? YOU ALL RIGHT? YOU WERE HAVING A BAD DREAM!
I'M... I'M ALL RIGHT, BRENDA! IT... IT'S NOTHING! GO TO SLEEP!
GOOD-NIGHT, ERIC!
'IT WAS MORE THAN TEN YEARS LATER WHEN YOU CAME BACK! I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN! ALMOST...'
YOU!
HELLO, DOC! YES, IT'S ME! ALAN THORKY! I... I WANT YOU TO EXAMINE ME! I THINK THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG!
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IT WAS CANCER, WASN'T IT ALAN? YOU HAD CANCER! THE INCURABLE MALIGNANT KIND...'
HOW MUCH TIME DO I HAVE, DOC?
SIX MONTHS! A YEAR! NO MORE!
THEN WE'VE GOT TO DO IT AGAIN! IT'S THE ONLY WAY OUT!
NO! NO, I WON'T PERFORM THAT FIENDISH OPERATION AGAIN!
AREN'T YOU FORGETTING SOMETHING, DOC? THAT KID... THAT KID WE KILLED!
YOU...YOU'D TELL...?
'I WAS HELPLESS, ALAN! HELPLESSLY TRAPPED! THERE WAS BLOOD ON OUR HANDS! A YOUNG MAN'S BLOOD! THE ONE YOU'D BROUGHT TO MY LABORATORY OVER TEN YEARS BEFORE! AND NOW, YOU WERE ASKING ME TO DO IT AGAIN...'
THAT'S SMART, DOC! AFTER ALL, YOU HAVE YOUR REPUTATION TO PROTECT! I'LL BE BACK...TONIGHT! BE READY!
YES! I'LL... BE READY!
'AND SO, FOR THE SECOND TIME, I PREPARED THE EQUIPMENT NECESSARY FOR THAT HORRIBLE OPERATION! AND THAT NIGHT, FOR THE SECOND TIME, YOU BROUGHT A VICTIM TO MY LABORATORY...'
EXAMINE HIM FIRST, THIS TIME! I DON'T WANT WHAT HAPPENED LAST TIME TO HAPPEN AGAIN! MAKE SURE HE'S HEALTHY!
Y-YES, ALAN!
'AND ONCE AGAIN, I DID IT! I KILLED THAT POOR MAN! AND YOU GOT UP FROM THE OPERATING TABLE HEALTHY AND CANCER-FREE...'
DON'T COME BACK! DON'T EVER COME BACK!
S'LONG, DOC! AND...THANKS!
'AND ONCE AGAIN, I HAD THOSE HORRIBLE NIGHTMARES...
ERIC! ERIC! WAKE UP!
HUH? WHA...WHAT'S WRONG BRENDA? OH! I...I MUST HAVE BEEN DREAMING...

'BUT YOU STILL WEREN'T SATISFIED, WERE YOU, ALAN? TWELVE YEARS LATER, YOU WERE BACK! YOU'D DISCOVERED SOMETHING WONDERFUL ABOUT THOSE OPERATIONS...'
ETERNAL YOUTH?! I DON'T UNDERSTAND!
YHAT'S WHAT I SAID. OOO! ETERNAL YOUTH!
JUST LOOK AT MY FACE! WHEN I FIRST CAME TO YOU, I WAS THIRTY-ONE! NOW... TWENTY-TWO YEARS LATER...
YOU... TOU LOOK THIRTY FIVE... AY YHE MOST!
EXACTLY! IT'S THOSE OPERATIONS YOU PENFORMED! AN OPENATION LIKE THAT PERFONMED EVERY TEN YEARS, WILL KEEP ME LOOKING LIKE THIS INDEFINITELY!
YOU'RE MAD!
AM I MAD, OOOTON MONDRUM? LOOK AY YOU! LOOK HOW YOU'VE AGED! YOU'RE FIFTY-ONE... AND YOU LOOK IT! ME! I'M FIFTY-THREE...
I WON'T HAVE ANYTHING TO OO WIYH IT! GEY SOMEONE ELSE!
OKAY, DOG! HAVE IY TOUN OWN WAY! YHE POLICE WILL BE VERY INTERESTED IN FINDING OUY ABOUY THOSE TWO UNIDENTIFIED CORPSES...
ALL RIGHY! ALL RIGHT! COME TONIGHT." I'LL... BE READY."
'THAT WAS YEN YEARS AGO, ALAN! THAT NIGHY TEN YEARS AGO, I PENFONMED THIS EVIL... THIS HONNOR... FOR YHE THIRD AND LAST TIME...'
SEE YOU IN TEN YEARS, DOC!
I HOPE I'M DEAD BY YHEN...
'BUT I DION'T DIE, ALAN! AND SO, THIS AFTERNOON, YOU DAME FON YHE FOURTH YIME...'
GASP! ALAN!" I...
I'M HERE, ENIC... AS I PROMISED I'D BE...

'YOU HADN'T AGED VERY MUCH IN THOSE TEN YEARS, ALAN! YOU STILL LOOKED AS THOUGH YOU WERE IN YOUR THIRTIES!'
NOT BAD FOR A MAN OF SIXTY THREE, EH, ERIC?
ALAN! LET'S LEAVE WELL ENOUGH ALONE! PLEASE!
NO, ERIC! TONIGHT, WE PERFORM THE OPERATION AGAIN!
I...I... ALL NIGHT, ALAN!
'AND SO, TONIGHT, YOU BROUGHT ME OUN FOURTH VIOTIM...'
HELP ME GET HIM ON THE TABLE, ERIC!
Y-YES, ALAN!
THE THNOBBING SOUND FILLED THE LABONATONY! ENIC STOOD WITH HIS ANMS FOLOED, STARING DOWN AT ALAN...
BUT, NOW IT'S ALL OVER, ALAN! YOU'RE HELPLESS! YOU CAN'T STOP ME FROM DOING WHAT MUST BE DONE!
ERIC! SO ON WITH IT! DON'T LEAVE ME LIKE THIS! GO ON WITH THE OPERATION!
NO, ALAN! I'M NOT GOING TO KILL HIM! I'M NOT GOING TO GIVE YOU HIS BODY!
ERIC! THINK OF YOUN WIFE...YOUR REPUTATION!
BNENDA DIED LAST YEAR, ALAN! I'M AN OLD MAN! LIFE DOESN'T MEAN ANYTHONE! I'M GOING TO THE POLICE AND CONFESS EVERYTHING!
ERIC! NO! DON'T LEAVE ME!
ERIC TOOK A NEEDLE FROM THE INGTRUMENT TNAY AND STARED OOWN AT ALAN...
BUT BEFORE I GO, THERE'S SOMETHING I MUST DO!
NO, ERIC! NO! DON'T PUNCTURE THE BLOOD HOSE!
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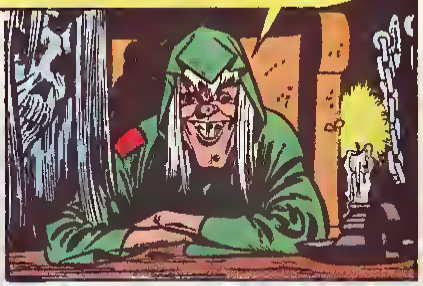
THE HEAD ON THE TABLE STANED IN HONROR AS ENIC JABBED THE REEDLE IRTO ONE OF THE THROBBING HOSES THAT RAN TO ITS NECK...
EEEEEEEE
GOOD-BYE, ALAN!
IT'S EYES BULGED IR THEIR SOCKETS AS IT WATCHED THE TIRY FOUNTAIN OF RED GUSH IR REGULAR SPURTS FROM THE PURCTURED PI
ERIC! I'LL DIE!
AND THE SECRET OF EXCHANGING LIVING BODIES WILL DIE WITH YOU ALAN!
ERIC ROLLED THE TABLE WITH THE UNCONSCIOUS FOURTH VICTIM LYING UPON IT PAST THE PLEADING HEAD
ERIC! HAVE PITY!
THIS TIME THE POLICE WON'T FIND AN UNIDENTIFIED DECAPITATED CORPSE TO PUZZLE THEM, ALAN
ERIC! COME BACK!
GOOD-BYE, ALAN...
THE PUMP THROBBED DR! THE HEAD ON THE LABORATORY TABLE CONNECTED TO THE VARIOUS HOSES AND TUBES, REM DIZZY...
ERIC! C-COME... B-B-BACK!
ARD THEN THE PNEDIOUS RED FLUID STOPPED GUSHING FROM THE PUNCTURED TUBING! THE HEAD'S EYES GLAZED!ALAN THONKY...WHOSE BODY HAS DIED THINTY-THNEE YEARS BEFORE.. HAD FINALLY JOINED IT...
HEE, HEE! DOESN'T THAT TOP ALL, KIDDIES? SO ENIC HAD BEEN SWITCHING ALAN'S HEAD FROM BODY TO BODY! WELL, THAT'S ONE WAY TO KEEP ONE'S YOUTH, EH? HEE, HEE! AS FOR ERIC'S FATE...WELL..HE'S IN THE BOOBY HATCH, NOW... PADDED CELL DEPARTMENT! WHO'D BELIEVE A STORY LIKE HIS? HEE..HEE! AND ALAN WASN'T MUCH HELP IR CORROBORATING ENIC'S STORY! A REGULAR DEADHEAD, THAT BOY! BIG YOU LATER! HERE'S V.K.!

THE VAULT OF HORROR!

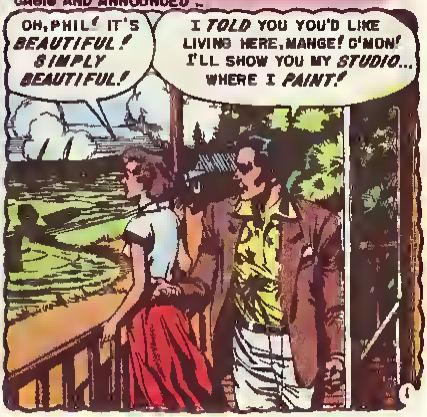
HEH, HEH! WELCOME TO THE *VAULT OF HORROR*, CREEPS! THIS IS YOUR *HOST IN HOWLS, THE VAULT-KEEPER*, SPOOKING ... ER ... SPEAKING! *COME IN! SIT DOWN!* CAME TO JOIN A *RED-HOT POKER GANG?* I HAVE A FEW *EXTRA RED-HOT POKERS! NO? OH!* THEN I MIGHT AS WELL GO RIGHT INTO MY *HORROR YARN!* I *CALL* THIS *SPINE-TINGLING, BLOOD-CURDLING* TALE...

A CREEP in the DEEP!

THE MOONLIGHT SHIMMERED OVER THE NERVOUS BLACK WATER ON THE LAKE! THE MAN ADJUSTED THE RUBBER DIVING MASK OVER HIS FACE AND STARTED DOWN THE SILVER SAND BEACH! THE SPEAR AND LAMP HUNG LIMPLY IN HIS HANDS! THE BLACK RUBBER FLIPPERS ON HIS FEET SLAPPED AGAINST THE WET LAKE SHORE...

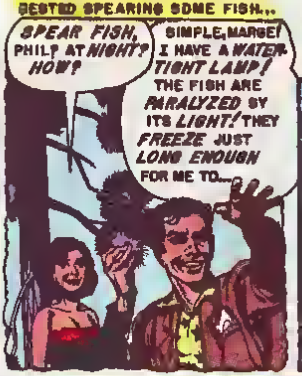


PHILIP HAD BROUGHT MARGARET, HIS YOUNG BRIDE, TO HIS LAKESIDE RETREAT ALMOST A YEAR BEFORE! SHE'D STOOD ON THE PORCH OF THE CABIN AND ANNOUNCED...



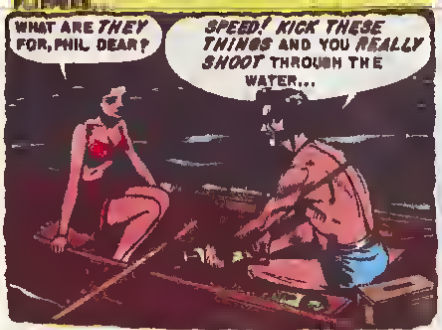
THE WATER LAPPED AGAINST THE MAN'S ANKLES! HE PLICKED ON THE LAMP! ITS YELLOW BEAM REACHED OUT INTO THE NIGHT...

IT HAD BEEN A NIGHT JUST LIKE THIS THAT PHILIP HAD SUGGESTED SPEARING SOME FISH...

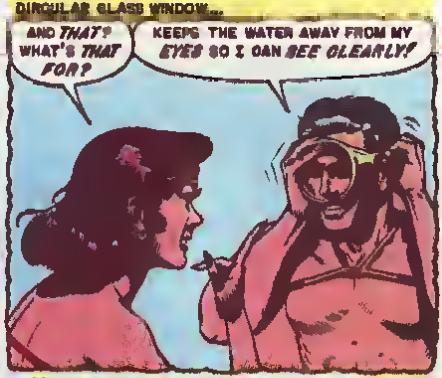


THE MAN MOVED FORWARD... HIS BLACK RUBBER FLIPPERS SLIDING ACROSS THE LAKE BOTTOM! THE WATER WAS UP TO HIS KNEES, NOW! IT WAS COLD! COLD ...LIKE THAT NIGHT....

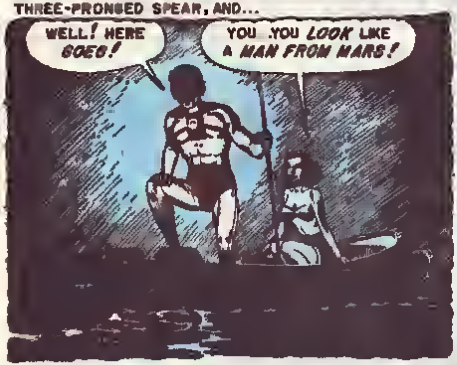
PHILIP HAD GOTTEN INTO HIS SUIT AND TAKEN MARGIE OUT IN THE ROWBOAT! WHEN HE'D REACHED THAT 'SPECIAL' SPOT, HE'D SLIPPED ON THE RUBBER FLIPPERS...



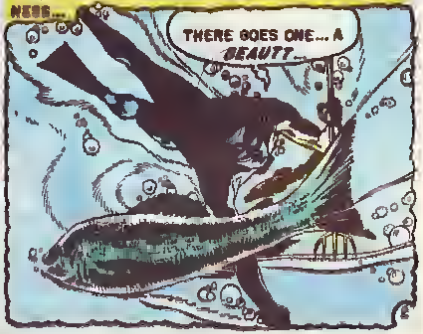
THEN, HE'D DONNED THE RUBBER MASK WITH THE CIRCULAR GLASS WINDOW...



THEN HE'D LIT HIS WATER-TIGHT LAMP, TAKEN HIS THREE-PRONGED SPEAR, AND...



YES, THE WATER HAD BEEN COLD THAT NIGHT! THE BUBBLES FROM THE DIVE HAD CLEARED AWAY AND PHILIP HAD KICKED DOWNWARD INTO THE BLACKNESS...

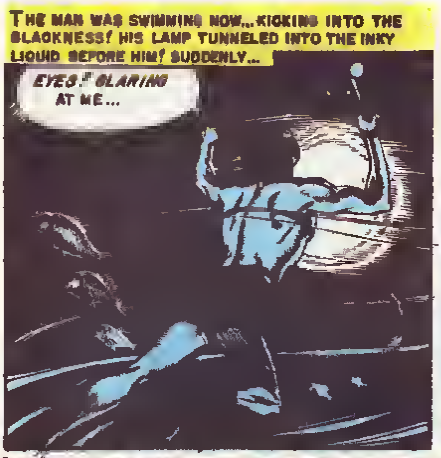


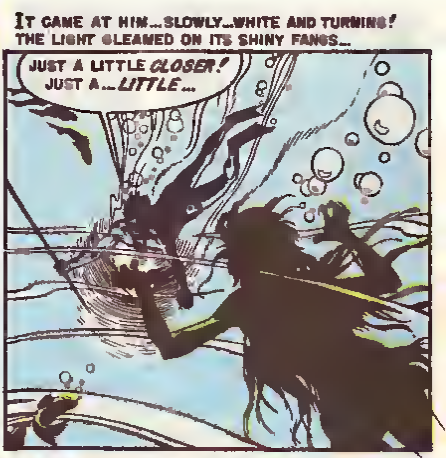
THE MAN MOVED FORWARD INTO THE LAKE! THE WATER LAPPED AGAINST HIS THIGHS! THE MOONLIGHT FLASHED ON THE SURFACE...
THE FISH HAD FLASHED THROUGH THE LAMP BEAM! PHILIP HAD KICKED AFTER IT, BUT IT'D SWERVED SHARPLY AND SHOT OFF INTO THE BLACKNESS! SO PHILIP HAD COME TO THE SURFACE FOR BREATH...
GASP...GASP... MISSED HIM, DARN IT!
PHILIP! YOU'RE SO FAR FROM THE BOAT!
THAT STRANGE SOUND! PHILIP HAD HEARD IT THEN! BUT HE HADN'T THOUGHT ABOUT IT...
I'M OKAY, HONEY! SEE YOU...
PHILIP! I...I...
HE'D GONE BACK DOWN! THAT TIME HE'D FOUND ONE! A NICE-SIZED LAKE TROUT! HE'D CHASED IT AND SPEARED IT JUST AS HIS BREATH HAD GIVEN OUT! WHEN HE'D POPPED TO THE SURFACE, MARGIE WAS SCREAMING...
EEEEEEEE!
I'M OKAY, MARGIE! HERE I AM!
AND THEN THE SCREAMING HAD STOPPED, AND HE'D HEARD MARGIE KICKING AROUND IN THE BOAT...
LOOK, MARGE! ISN'T HE A BEAUTY?
SILENCE! JUST THE WATER LAPPING AGAINST THE BOARDS! PHIL'D SHOT THE LAMP IN THE BOAT'S DIRECTION! IT WAS OUT OF RANGE! THERE'D BEEN A SPLASH...
MARGIE? MARGIE? SPEAK TO ME!
THAT NOISE AGAIN! THAT QUEER NOISE! LIKE SOMEONE BEATING AN OLD DUSTY CARPET! PHIL'D STARTED TOWARD THE BOAT, CALLING HER NAME! NO ANSWER! THEN, WHEN HIS LIGHT COULD REACH IT, HE'D SEEN...
GOOD LORD! MARGIE! MARGIE!

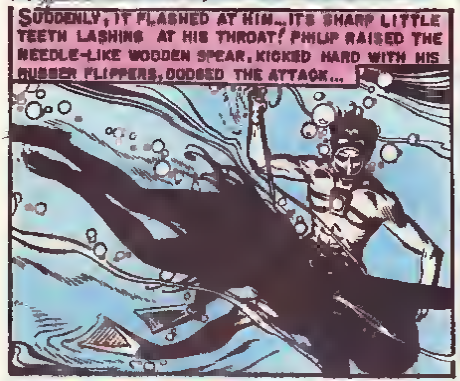
THE MAN MUTTERED TO HIMSELF AS THE WATER SUCKED AND GURGLED AROUND HIS WAIST...
COULDN'T SWIM! COULDN'T SWIM A STROKE!
PHILIP HAD DIVED AGAIN AND AGAIN... LOOKING FOR MARGIE! FINALLY, AFTER HALF AN HOUR, HE'D CRAWLED ONTO THE OVERTURNED ROWBOAT... BREATHLESS... SOBBING...
MARGIE! MARGE... SOB... SOB...
AND HE'D WATCHED FROM HIS PORCH THE NEXT DAY, AS THE BOATS MOVED BACK AND FORTH... DRAGGING FOR HER BODY...
BUT THEY NEVER FOUND HER BODY! FOR THREE DAYS, THEY DRAGGED... WITH NO LUCK! SO PHILIP HAD CURSED THE CABIN, AND THE LAKE... AND GONE AWAY...
I'M SURE SORRY T'SEE YUH GO, PHIL! WE'LL ALL MISS YOU 'ROUND HERE! I'LL TRY AND GET A GOOD PRICE FOR THE PLACE!
JUST GET ME WHAT I PAID FOR IT, ED! THAT'S... ALL I WANT!
BUT THREE MONTHS LATER PHIL'D COME BACK...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN YOU'VE BEEN HAVIN' TROUBLE GETTING RID OF THE PLACE? I'VE GOT TO HAVE THE MONEY!
SORRY, PHIL! NO ONE'S BUYIN' THESE DAYS! FIRST YOUR WIFE'S DISAPPEARANCE... AND NOW THESE MYSTERIOUS DEATHS...
DEATHS?! WHAT DEATHS?
OH! THAT'S RIGHT! YOU BEEN AWAY! YOU COULDN'T A-KNOWN! YEP! DEATHS! THREE! ALL IN TWO MONTHS TIME! FOUND THEIR BODIES... FLOATIN ON THE LAKE!
DROWNED?
NOPE! NO WATER IN THE LUNGS! THEIR BLOOD HAD BEEN DRAINED!
WILLIAMSON'S BEST

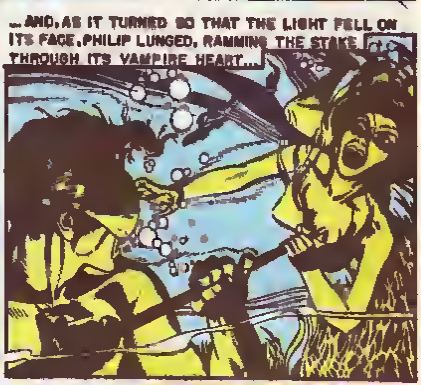
THE WATER SLID UPWARD, OVER THE MAN'S CHEST! HE MOVED FORWARD SLOWLY...DELIBERATELY...
BLOOD... DRAINED!
YEP!! FOLKS SAY THERE'S LEECHES IN THE LAKE! NOBODY WANTS TO BUY NOW!
LEECHES?
YEP! SO THAT'S WHY I CAN'T SELL YOUR PLACE PHIL! NOT NOW... ANYWAY! I SUGGEST YOU START LIVIN' THERE AGAIN... TILL ALL THIS BLOWS OVER!
I'LL... HAVE TO...ED! I...I HAVEN'T EARNED A DIME SINCE...SINCE MARGARET DROWNED! I...I CAN'T SEEM TO PAINT ANYMORE!
OH, YOU'LL START AGAIN, PHIL! MAYBE BEIN' BACK AT THE OLD STUDIO WILL HELP!
SO PHILIP HAD COME BACK...COME BACK TO THE LAKE! AND THEN...ABOUT A WEEK LATER, THE FORTH VICTIM WAS FOUND...
WELL?
NOT A DROP! BLOOD COMPLETELY DRAINED!
HE...HE...WENT SWIMMING... SOB... LAST NIGHT! I...I TOLD HIM NOT TO GO! THE...THE LEECHES... SOB... SOB...
WITHIN A MATTER OF MONTHS, THE LAKESIDE HOMES HAD ALL BEEN BOARDED UP AND ABANDONED! ED HAD MANY MORE TO SELL BESIDE PHIL'S...
WHAT'S UP, ED? WHY THE URGENT CALL?
SIT DOWN, PHIL! LISTEN! I GOT A THEORY!
THEORY. ED? WHAT ABOUT?
ABOUT THEM BODIES... AND THE LEECHES! THERE AIN'T NO LEECHES IN THAT LAKE, PHIL! NEVER WERE! NO, IT AIN'T LEECHES WHAT'S BEEN DRAININ' THE BLOOD FROM THEM BODIES! IT'S...IT'S...

THE MAN LOOKED DOWN AS THE WATER CLIMBED OVER THE MASK! THE MAN WAS SEARCHING FOR SOMETHING...
YOU'RE MAD, ED! IT'S CRAZY!
IS IT? WEREN'T ALL THOSE PEOPLE SWIMMING IN THE LAKE AT NIGHT...
YES, BUT... BUT A VAMPIRE!
YES, A VAMPIRE... IN THE LAKE!
BUT...BUT MARGIE... MY WIFE! SHE WASN'T SWIMMING IN THE LAKE! SHE...
I'M NOT INCLUDING YOUR WIFE IN THIS, PHIL! HER DEATH WAS DIFFERENT! BESIDES! WE NEVER FOUND HER...
THAT SOUND! THAT SOUND PHIL HAD HEARD THE NIGHT MARGIE HAD DROWNED! LIKE SOMEONE BEATING AN OLD CARPET...LIKE...LIKE...
LIKE THE BEATING OF WINGS...LARGE WINGS!
HUH? YOU SAY SOMETHIN', PHIL?
PHIL HAD DARTED OUT OF ED'S OFFICE...
PHIL! WHERE YOU GOIN'?
TO GET YOUR LAKE VAMPIRE, ED!
...SPED BACK TO THE CABIN... RIPPED THE THREE-PRONGED FORK-END FROM ITS LONG WOODEN SHAFT... AND...
SHARP! GOT TO GET IT GOOD... AND... SHARP...


THE MAN WAS SWIMMING NOW...KICKING INTO THE BLACKNESS! HIS LAMP TUNNELED INTO THE INKY LIQUID BEFORE HIM! SUDDENLY...
EYES! GLARING AT ME...

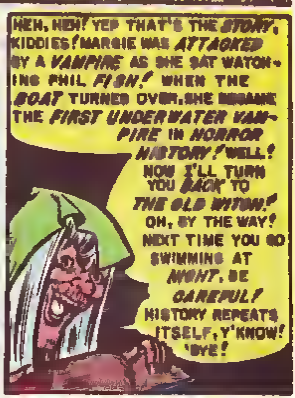

IT CAME AT HIM...SLOWLY...WHITE AND TURNING! THE LIGHT GLEAMED ON ITS SHINY FANGS...
JUST A LITTLE CLOSER! JUST A...LITTLE...


SUDDENLY, IT FLASHED AT HIM...ITS SHARP LITTLE TEETH LASHING AT HIS THROAT! PHILIP RAISED THE NEEDLE-LIKE WOODEN SPEAR, KICKED HARD WITH HIS RUBBER FLIPPERS, DODGED THE ATTACK...


...AND, AS IT TURNED SO THAT THE LIGHT FELL ON ITS FACE, PHILIP LUNGED, RAMMING THE STAKE THROUGH ITS VAMPIRE HEART...

MARGIE'S LIFELESS BODY SETTLED TO THE LAKE FLOOR, THE WOODEN SPEAR STICKING ANGULARLY FROM HER CHEST...SENDING UP LITTLE BUBBLES...

...AS PHIL MOVED OUT OF THE LAKE INTO THE COLD NIGHT AIR...


HEH, HEH! YEP THAT'S THE STORY, KIDDIES! MARGIE WAS ATTACKED BY A VAMPIRE AS SHE SAT WATCHING PHIL FISH! WHEN THE BOAT TURNED OVER, SHE BECAME THE FIRST UNDERWATER VAMPIRE IN HORROR HISTORY! WELL! NOW I'LL TURN YOU BACK TO THE OLD WITCH! OH, BY THE WAY! NEXT TIME YOU GO SWIMMING AT NIGHT, BE CAREFUL! HISTORY REPEATS ITSELF, Y'KNOW! 'BYE!

DUKES IN DISGUISE

Duke Aldo Braggadocio and Duke Gino Severini were two powerful nobles of 15th century Tuscany. Their duchys were in neighboring provinces and they hated one another! One boasted that he had more *bravi* . . . more men-at-arms to defend his land, the other bragged that his castle was impregnable to any attack!

Duke Braggadocio was famous for his fertile vineyards and rare Chianti wine-making. Duke Severini charged Braggadocio with having diverted streams from his land to supply his rich vineyards with an elaborate irrigation system. Severini's grapes were quite inferior, as was his soil! But he had something to make Braggadocio envious . . . sanctuaries of beautifully plumed live birds from all parts of the world!

Both Dukes were young and impetuous and madly in love with dark-eyed Gracioso Bevacqua, a nobleman's daughter! Gracioso was equally impressed by the power and possessions of both suitors. When they proposed marriage to her separately, but simultaneously, she knew she must choose one by the process of elimination!

One night, while sitting in Severini's bird-inhabited gardens, her eyes glittered like starlight on a stilleto as she wheedled and cajoled the Duke into undertaking a quest . . . to prove his love for her. He was to disguise himself, gain entry into Braggadocio's domain, and steal a bottle of rare Chianti from the latter's wine cellar. She would know the bottle! It would bear the personal seal and coat-of-arms of the Casa Braggadocio.

Then she paid an unexpected call upon Duke Braggadocio, whom she found strolling amongst his sun-lit, fruit-laden trellises. The Duke was soon mesmerized, too, by the grape-stained lips that spoke of a quest for the proof of love!

Braggadocio was to disguise himself, slip unsuspected into Severini's "impregnable" duchy, and pluck a feather from a blue heron tethered in his rival's gardens. The exquisite bird was the favorite of his master!

. . . . .

Braggadocio had the flowing blue feather in his hand when the deprived and indignant heron beat its wings in wild alarm! The din created by the frightened bird attracted the Captain-of-the-guard and his soldiers. Duke Severini was absent at the time, being away on his quest. Without waiting for their Duke's counsel . . . nor his return . . . they chopped off the violating Duke's limbs! Then they sent the shaft of Braggadocio's dead body back to his duchy with just the calamus of the feather which had been stripped of all of its flowing azure barbs.

A few days later, the body of Duke Severini came home to *his* duchy in a cask full of wine!

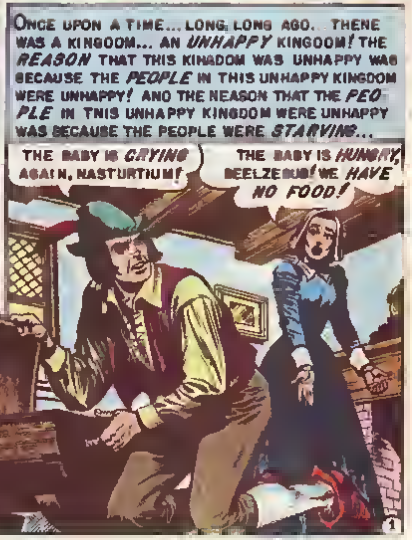
Braggadocio's men had captured *him* . . . and drowned him in a barrel of the rarest Chianti!

THE OLD WITCH'S GRIM FAIRY TALE!

HEE-HEE! YEP! HERE'S *ANOTHER* ONE! ANOTHER *CHILDISH-CHILLER!* ANOTHER *INFANTILE INSANITY!* A *'GRIM'*...AND I *MEAN* IT... *FAIRY TALE!* I *CALL* THIS *DELIGHTFUL DELVING* INTO THE *SICKENINGLY SWEET*...

...FROM HUNGER!

ONCE UPON A TIME... LONG, LONG AGO. THENE WAS A KINGDOM... AN *UNHAPPY* KINGDOM! THE *REASON* THAT THIS KINADOM WAS UNHAPPY WAS BECAUSE THE *PEOPLE* IN THIS UNHAPPY KINGDOM WERE UNHAPPY! AND THE REASON THAT THE *PEOPLE* IN THIS UNHAPPY KINGDOM WERE UNHAPPY WAS BECAUSE THE PEOPLE WERE *STARVING*...



NOW HIGH UP ON A MOUNTAIN, OVERLOOKING THIS UNHAPPY KINGDOM, WAS A MAJESTIC CASTLE...
CHOMP CHOMP
...AND IN THIS MAJESTIC CASTLE WAS A MAJESTIC DINING-ROOM...
CHOMP... CHOMP...
...AND IN THIS MAJESTIC DINING-ROOM SAT A MAJESTIC KING...
CHOMP! CHOMP!
ALL DAY LONG, THIS MAJESTIC KING WOULD SIT IN THE MAJESTIC DINING ROOM (OF THE MAJESTIC CASTLE HIGH UP ON THE MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING THE UNHAPPY KINGDOM) AND EAT... AND EAT... AND...
CHOMP... CHOMP...
NOW IT SEEMS THAT IN THIS MAJESTIC CASTLE WAS A KITCHEN! AND IN THIS KITCHEN WAS A CHEF... THE ROYAL CHEF...
ROYAL CHEF!
Y-Y-YES, YOUR MAJESTY!
MORE FOOD!
Y-Y-YES, YOUR MAJESTY!
ALL DAY LONG, WHILE THE MAJESTIC KING ATE IN THE MAJESTIC DINING-ROOM (OF THE MAJESTIC CASTLE HIGH UP ON THE MOUNTAIN OVERLOOKING THE UNHAPPY KINGDOM), THE ROYAL CHEF WOULD COOK FOOD FOR HIM...
EAT...EAT...EAT! THAT'S ALL HE DOES IS EAT! THE FAT PIG!
HURRY! MORE FOOD, ROYAL CHEF!
2

AND EVERY NIGHT, AFTER THE MAJESTIC KING HAD STUFFED HIMSELF UNTIL HE COULD EAT NO MORE...
NO... BURRRRRP... MORE, ROYAL CHEF!
Y-Y-YES, YOUR MAJESTY!
...THE ROYAL CHEF WOULD LEAVE THE CASTLE AND MAKE HIS WAY DOWN THE MOUNTAIN TO HIS STARVING FAMILY...
FAT PIG! WHILE THE PEOPLE STARVE, HE STUFFS HIMSELF SO FULL HE CANNOT MOVE!
WHEN THE ROYAL CHEF WOULD ARRIVE AT HIS RAMSHACKLE HOUSE, HIS STARVING FAMILY WOULD MEET HIM AT THE DOOR...
DADDY! WE'RE...
...HUNGRY, DADDY!
DID YOU... DID YOU BRING ANYTHING TO NIGHT, DEAR?
I MANAGED TO STEAL A DRUM-STICK THAT STILL HAS A LITTLE MEAT ON IT! HERE!
BOOOY!
BOOOY!
AND WHILE HIS STARVING FAMILY WOULD NIBBLE THE LAST BITS OF MEAT STILL CLINGING TO THE STOLEN DRUMSTICK, THE ROYAL CHEF WOULD WATCH... AND SIMMER...
PIG! GLUTTONOUS PIG!
LET ME SUCK THE JUICE!
HO! IT'S MY TURN, TONIGHT!
BUT THE OTHER PEOPLE OF THE UNHAPPY KING-DOM WERE NOT AS FORTUNATE AS THE ROYAL CHEF'S FAMILY! THEY COULD NOT STEAL ANY FOOD! THE MAJESTIC KING KEPT HIS LIVESTOCK HERDS WELL GUARDED...
LOOK, CAPTAIN! A PEASANT...
HE IS STEAL-ING A CALF!
THOSE WHO TRIED TO STEAL FOOD FROM THE KING WERE ALWAYS SEVERELY PUNISHED...
BEELZEBUB! WHAT HAPPENED TO YOUR HAIR?
I WAS CAUGHT... STEALING A CALF! THEY... CHOKE...

SO THE PEOPLE OF THE UNHAPPY EINSDOM GREW MORE AND MORE UNHAPPY...
THE BABY... SOS... HAS... SOS... STARVED TO DEATH, BEELZEBUB!
I... SOS... I TRIED, NASTURTIUM!
WHILE THE MAJESTIC EINS SNEW FATTEH AND FATTER...
MORE FOOD, ROYAL CHEF!
Y-Y-YES, YOUR MAJESTY!
ANG EACH NIGHT, WHEN THE ROYAL CHEF WOULD COME HOME...
DADDY! WE'RE...
...HUNGHY, DADDY!
DID YOU BRING ANY-THING TONIGHT, DEAN?
...HE WOULD WATCH HIS STARVING FAMILY HISSLE THE SCRAPS HE'D STOLEN...
IT'S MY TURN TO SUCK THE JUICK FROM THE BONE!
NO! IT'S MY TURN!
CHILDREN! CHILDREN! PLEASE!
BESIDES...
...AND HE'D SINNER...
...IT'S MY TURN, TONIGHT!
PIG! GLUTTONOUS PIG!
THEN, ONE NIGHT...
NO, SUHRHPPP... MORE, ROYAL CHEF!
Y-Y-YES, YOUR MAJESTY!
THE ROYAL CHEF PREPARED TO GO HOME! HE POKED AROUND IN THE SAUSAGE SEARCHING FOR A BONE!
PICKED CLEAN! NOT A SCRAP OF FOOD! THE PIG! THE FAT PIG!
I-I-I-I-I-I-I!

SUDDENLY, THE ROYAL CHEF SPOTTED A MEAT-LADEN BONE ON THE TABLE BEFORE THE SLEEPING KING . . .
IF... I... COULD... TIPTOE... IN... AND...
BUT JUST AS THE ROYAL CHEF WAS LIFTING THE MEAT-LADEN BONE, THE KING WOKE UP...
BURRRPP! HUH? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
J-J-JUST CLEANING UP THE TABLE, YOUR MAJESTY!
BURRPPP! BUT I'M... HICCUP... NOT THROUGH! GIVE ME THAT BONE!
TH-THIS ONE, YOUR MAJESTY?
YES! GIVE... BURRPP... IT TO ME!
H-HERE, YOUR MAJESTY!
CHOMP! CHOMP!
PIG!
D'JDU SHAY SHUMPTIN'? CHOMP... CHOMP...
PIG!
WHAT? WHAT DID YOU CALL ME?
A PIG! YOU'RE A PIG! AN OVER-STUFFED FAT PIG! DO YOU KNOW WHAT A PIG IS GOOD FOR?
5

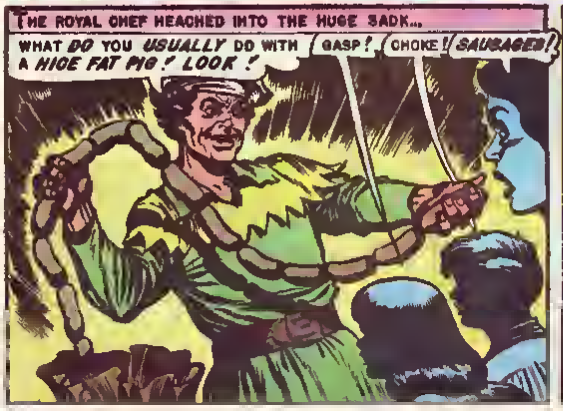
AND SO, FOR THE LAST TIME, THE ROYAL CHEF MADE HIS WAY DOWN THE MOUNTAIN TO HIS STARVING FAMILY...
FAT PIG! WELL, HE'LL STUFF HIMSELF NO MORE!

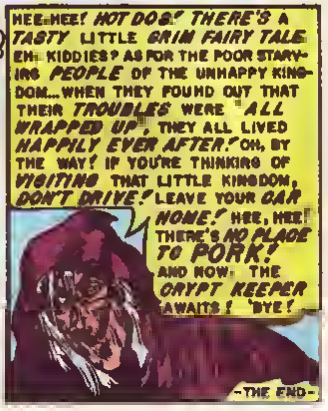
THIS TIME HE CARRIED A LARGE SACK! WHEN HE ARRIVED HOME...
DADDY! WE'RE... ...HUNGRY, DADDY!
DID YOU...
A FEAST!

HUH?
WHA...?
A FEAST! INVITE EVERYBODY! WE ARE GOING TO HAVE A FEAST!

BUT, DADDY!
WHERE DID YOU...
...GET THE FOOD?

THE FAT PIG! THE GLUTTONOUS OVER-STUFFED PIG!
MELVIN! W-WHAT DID YOU DO TO THE KING?


THE ROYAL CHEF REACHED INTO THE HUGE SACK...
WHAT DO YOU USUALLY DO WITH A NICE FAT PIG! LOOK!
GASP!
CHOKE!
SAUSAGED!


HEE-HEE! HOT DOG! THERE'S A TASTY LITTLE GRIM FAIRY TALE EH- KIDDIES? AS FOR THE POOR STARVING PEOPLE OF THE UNHAPPY KINGDOM... WHEN THEY FOUND OUT THAT THEIR TROUBLES WERE "ALL WRAPPED UP", THEY ALL LIVED HAPPILY EVER AFTER! OH, BY THE WAY! IF YOU'RE THINKING OF VISITING THAT LITTLE KINGDOM, DON'T DRIVE! LEAVE YOUR CAR HOME! HEE, HEE! THERE'S NO PLACE TO PORK! AND NOW: THE CRYPT KEEPER AWAITS! 'BYE!
-THE END-

THE CRYPT OF TERROR

HEH, HEH! YEP, IT'S YOUN *CRYPT-KEEPER* AGAIN, FIENDS... WELCOMING YOU ONCE MORE TO *THE CRYPT OF TERROR!* FON MY SPOT IN THE *OLD WITCH'S SLIME SHEET*. I'M GOINS TO TELL YOU A *YELP-YARN* ADAPTED FROM A *STORY BY ONE OF AMERICA'S TOP FANTASY WRITERS... RAY BRADBURY!* *MR. BRADBURY* ONIGINALLY CALLED THIS YARN *'THE COFFIN'!* I, BEING A *CLEVER* TALE-TELLEN *MYSELF*, CALL IT....

THE COFFIN!

RICHAND BRALING HAD LISTENED WITH INCREASING DIFFICULTY AND MUCH CUNIOSITY FOR A NUMBER OF DAYS TO THE BANGING AND RATTLING ABOUT IN HIS ELDEN BROTHER'S WORKSHOP! FINALLY, HE COULD STAND IT NO LONGER...

CHARLES BRALING WAS A DYING MAN...A BADLY DYING MAN! HE SEEMED TO BE IN A GREAT HURRY, BETWEEN RACKING COUGHS AND SPITTLINGS, TO PIECE TOGETHER ONE LAST INVENTION...
PLEASE, CHARLES! TELL ME...
IF YOU MUST KNOW... I'LL BE DEAD IN ANOTHER WEEK AND I'M...I'M BUILDING A COFFIN!
A COFFIN, MY DEAR CHARLIE! THAT DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A COFFIN! A COFFIN ISN'T THAT COMPLEX! COME ON, NOW! WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?
I TELL YOU, IT'S A COFFIN! AN ODD COFFIN, YES, BUT NEVERTHELESS...A COFFIN!
BUT IT WOULD BE EASIER TO BUY ONE!
NOT ONE LIKE THIS! YOU COULDN'T BUY ONE LIKE THIS... ANY PLACE...EVER! OH, IT'LL BE A REAL FINE COFFIN ALL RIGHT!
CHARLES FITTED AN ODD THINGUMABOB ON THE BOX BEFORE HIM! RICHARD MOVED FORWARD...
YOU'RE OBVIOUSLY LYING! WHY, THAT COFFIN IS A GOOD TWELVE FEET LONG! SIX FEET LONGER THAN NORMAL SIZE!
YEP!
AND THAT TRANSPARENT TOP! WHO EVER HEARD OF A COFFIN LID YOU CAN SEE THROUGH? WHAT GOOD IS A TRANSPARENT LID TO A CORPSE?
OH, JUST NEVER YOU MIND AT ALL! TUM-TA-TUM...DA-DEE
THE OLD MAN WENT HUMMING AND HAMMERING ABOUT THE SHOP! RICHARD HAD TO SHOUT ABOVE THE DIN...
THIS COFFIN IS TERRIBLY THICK! WHY IT MUST BE FIVE FEET THICK! HOW UTTERLY UNNECESSARY!
I ONLY WISH I MIGHT LIVE TO PATENT THIS AMAZING COFFIN! IT WOULD BE A GOD-SEND TO ALL THE POOR PEOPLES OF THE WORLD! THINK HOW IT WOULD ELIMINATE THE EXPENSES OF FUNERALS...
OH, BUT, OF COURSE, YOU DON'T KNOW HOW IT WOULD DO THAT, DO YOU? HOW BILLY OF ME! WELL I SHAN'T TELL YOU! IF THIS COFFIN COULD BE MASS-PRODUCED, GAD, WHAT MONEY PEOPLE WOULD SAVE!
OH, GO TO BLAZES!
2

RICHARD STORMED OUT OF HIS ELDER BROTHER'S SHOP! POOR RICHARD! YES, IT HAD BEEN AN UNPLEASANT LIFE! YOUNG RICHARD HAD ALWAYS BEEN SUCH A BOUNDER, HE'D NEVER HAD TWO COINS TO CLINK TOGETHER AT ONE TIME! ALL OF HIS MONEY HAD COME FROM OLD BROTHER CHARLIE, WHO HAD THE INDECENCY TO REMIND HIM OF IT ALL THE TIME...
SELFISH OLD TIGHTWAD! WELL, THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR, CHARLES... FOR YOU TO DIE! SO AHEAD, YOU OLD FOOL! HAMMER YOUR LIFE AWAY!
RICHARD SPENT MANY HOURS WITH HIS HOBBY! HE DEARLY LOVED PILING UP EMPTY BOTTLES WITH FRENCH WINE LABELS IN THE GARDEN! AS RICHARD OFTEN SAID WHILE SITTING AND SIPPING, SIPPING AND SITTING...
I LIKE TH' WAY THEY CLINT_NIG!
ONE MORNING, THE OLD BROTHER TODDLED UPSTAIRS AND STOLE THE INSIDES OUT OF THE ELECTRIC PHONOGRAPH...
ANOTHER MORNING, HE RAIDED THE GARDENER'S GREENHOUSE...
STILL ANOTHER TIME, CHARLES RECEIVED A DELIVERY FROM A MEDICAL COMPANY...
SIGN HERE, PLEASE!
YES... COUGH.. THANK YOU!
RICHARD WAS NEVER ALLOWED TO BUY ANYTHING FOR HIMSELF! IT WAS ALWAYS BOUGHT FOR HIM... GIVEN TO HIM! HE HAD TO ASK FOR EVERYTHING, EVEN WRITING PAPER! RICHARD CONSIDERED HIMSELF QUITE A MARTYR TO HAVE PUT UP WITH TAKING THINGS FROM THAT RICKETY OLD BROTHER FOR SO LONG! SO, NOW, WHILE THE HAMMERING AND THE MURMURING EXCURSIONS WENT ON, RICHARD JUST SAT... AND WAITED...
FINALLY, ON THE FOURTEENTH MORNING, OLD CHARLIE ANNOUNCED...
I'M FINISHED!
...AND DROPPED DEAD!

RICHARD...WITHOUT SHOWING HIS INNER EXCITEMENT...ANOSE, WENT TO THE WINDOW, WATCHED THE SUNLIGHT PLAYFULLY GLITTENING AMONG THE EMPTY PAT BEETLE-LIKE CHAMPAGNE BOTTLES, THEN PICKED UP THE PHONE AND PERFUNCTORILY DIALED A NUMBER..

HELLO! *GREEN LAWN MORTUARY?*

HE LOOKED TO THE STAIRS WHERE DEAR OLD BROTHER CHARLIE LAY PEACEFULLY SPRAWLED AGAINST THE BANNISTER..

THIS IS THE *BRALING* RESIDENCE! WILL YOU SEND AROUND A *WICKER*, PLEASE? YES! FOR *BROTHER CHARLIE!* YES! THANK YOU!

LATER, AS THE MORTUARY PEOPLE WERE TAKING BROTHER CHARLIE OUT IN THEIR WICKER, THEY RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS...

AN *ORDINARY CASKET!* NO *FUNERAL SERVICE!* PUT HIM IN A *PINE COFFIN!* HE WOULD HAVE *PREFERRED* IT THAT WAY... *SIMPLE!* GOOD-BYE!

AFTER THEY LEFT, RICHARD RUBBED HIS HANDS TOGETHER...

NOW! WE SHALL *SEE* ABOUT THIS 'COFFIN' BUILT BY DEAR CHARLIE! I DO NOT SUPPOSE HE WILL *REALIZE* HE IS *NOT* BEING BURIED IN HIS *'SPECIAL' BOX!* HAH!

RICHARD DARTED INTO THE SHOP! THE COFFIN SAT BEFORE THE WIDE-FLUNG FRENCH WINDOWS, THE LID SHUT, COMPLETE AND NEAT, ALL PUT TOGETHER LIKE THE FINE INNARDS OF A SWISS WATCH! IT WAS VAST, AND RESTED UPON A LONG TABLE WITH ROLLERS BENEATH FOR EASY MANEUVERING..

HMMPH!

THE COFFIN INTERIOR, AS RICHARD PEERED THROUGH THE TRANSPARENT LID, WAS *SIX FEET LONG*...

THERE MUST BE A GOOD *THREE FEET* OF *FALSE BODY* AT BOTH *HEAD* AND *FOOT* OF THE COFFIN, THEN! THREE FEET AT EACH END COVERED BY *SECRET PANELS* WHICH, WHEN I FIND THE WAY OF *OPENING THEM*, WILL *REVEAL*...

OF *COURSE!* MONEY! IT WOULD BE *JUST LIKE* OLD CHARLIE TO *SUCK HIS RICHES INTO HIS GRAVE* WITH HIMSELF, LEAVING ME WITH NOT A *CENT* TO BUY A *BOTTLE* WITH! THE OLD @x?#%!!

RICHARD RAISED THE TRANSPARENT LID AND FELT ABOUT, BUT FOUND NO HIDDEN BUTTONS! THERE WAS A SMALL SIGN, STUDIOUSLY INKED ON WHITE PAPER, THUMBTACKED TO THE SIDE OF THE SATIN-LINED BOX.

WHAT'S *THIS*? 'THE BRALING ECONOMY CASKET! COPYRIGHT, APRIL, 1952. SIMPLE TO OPERATE!'

HMMPH!

RICHARD SNORTED THINLY! WHO DID CHARLIE THINK HE WAS FOOLING? THERE WAS MORE WRITING! HE READ ON...

'*DIRECTIONS: SIMPLY PLACE BODY IN COFFIN!*' WHAT A *FOOL THING* TO SAY! PUT BODY IN COFFIN! *NATURALLY!* HOW *ELSE* WOULD ONE GO ABOUT IT?

RICHARD PEERED INTENTLY, FINISHING OUT THE DIRECTIONS...

'SIMPLY PLACE BODY IN COFFIN... *AND MUSIC WILL START!*' *WHAT?* IT *CAN'T* BE...! DON'T TELL ME ALL THIS WORK HAS BEEN FOR A...! WE'LL FIND OUT...!

THERE WOULD BE NO HARM IN LYING IN THE BOX... TESTING IT! RICHARD NOTICED SMALL VENTILATING HOLES IN THE SIDES! EVEN IF THE LID WERE CLOSED DOWN, THERE'D BE AIR! RICHARD HOISTED HIMSELF UP...

HMMPH! SIMPLY PLACE BODY IN COFFIN AND MUSIC WILL START! *REALLY!* HOW *NAIVE* OF OLD CHARLIE!

HE WAS LIKE A MAN GETTING INTO A BATH-TUB! HE FELT NAKED AND WATCHED OVER! HE PUT ONE SHINY SHOE INTO THE COFFIN, CROOKED HIS KNEES AND EASED HIMSELF IN! HE CROUCHED THERE, AS IF UNDECIDED ABOUT THE TEMPERATURE OF THE BATH-WATER...

HEH, HEH!

CHUCKLING SOFTLY, RICHAND LAY DOWN, PRETENDING TO HIMSELF THAT HE WAS DEAD...THAT PEOPLE WENE DROPPING TEANS OH HIM...THAT CANDLES WERE FUMING AND ILLUMINATING... AND THAT THE WONLD WAS STOPPED IN MID-STNIDE BECAUGE OF HIS PASSING! HE PUT ON A LONG PALE EXPNESSION AND SHUT HIS EYES... HOLDING BACK THE LAUGHTEN IN HIMSELF BEHIND PNESSED, QUIVERING LIPS...

WHRRRRR SPUNG

THE LID SLAMNED DOWN ON HIM! FROM OUTSIDE, IF ONE HAD JUST CONE INTO THE NOOM, ONE WOULD HAVE IMAGINED A WILD MAH WAS KICKING, POUNDING, BLATHERING, AND SHRIEKING INSIDE A CLOSET...

YAAAAAAAAA

THEN SILENCE! NICHARD NELAXED! THE LID WAS LOCKED! THENE WAS NOTHING TO DO BUT WAIT FOR SOMEONE TO COME AND LET HIM OUT...

THE MUSIC BEGAN TO PLAY! IT SEEMED TO COME FROM SOMEWHERE WITHIN THE COFFIN! IT WAS GREEN MUSIC! ORGAN MUSIC, VERY SLOW AND MELANCHOLY, TYPICAL OF GOTHIC ARCHES AND LONG BLACK TAPERS! IT SMELLED OF EARTH AND WHISPERS! IT ECHOED BETWEEN STONE WALLS! IT WAS SO SAD THAT ONE ALMOST CRIED LISTENING TO IT! IT WAS MUSIC OF POTTED PLANTS AND CRIMSON AND BLUE STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS! IT WAS LATE SUN AT TWILIGHT AND A COLD WIND BLOWING! IT WAS A DAWN WITH ONLY FOG AND A FAR AWAY FOG-HORN MOANING...

CHARLIE! YOU OLD FOOL!

TEARS OF LAUGHTER WELLED UP IN RICHARD'S EYES...

YOU OLD *FOOL*, YOU! SO *THIS* IS YOUR *ODD COFFIN!* NOTHING MORE THAN A *COFFIN WHICH PLAYS ITS OWN DIRGE!* OH, MY SAINTED GRANDMOTHER!

RICHARD'S EYES ROVED AIMLESSLY ABOUT! HIS FINGERS TAPPED SOFT LITTLE RYTHMS ON THE SATIN CUSHIONS! THROUGH THE TRANSPARENT LID HE SAW SUNLIGHT SHOOTING THROUGH THE OPEN FRENCH WINDOWS... DUST PARTICLES DANCING ON IT! IT WAS A LOVELY DAY! THE ORGAN MUSIC QUIETED! THE SERMON BEGAN...

WE ARE GATHERED TOGETHER, THOSE WHO LOVED AND THOSE WHO KNEW THE DECEASED...

...TO GIVE HIM OUR HOMAGE AND OUR DUE...

CHARLIE, BLESS YOU! THAT'S *YOUR* VOICE! A *MECHANICAL FUNERAL*, BY HEAVENS! *ORGAN MUSIC* AND *LECTURE!* AND *CHARLIE* GIVING HIS *OWN ORATION* FOR *HIMSELF!*

THE SOFT VOICE CONTINUED...

WE WHO KNEW AND LOVED HIM ARE GRIEVED AT THE PASSING OF *RICHARD BRALING!*

RICHARD! WHY, I'M *RICHARD!*

A SLIP OF THE TONGUE, NATURALLY! MERELY A SLIP! CHARLIE HAD MEANT TO SAY '*CHARLES*' BRALING! CERTAINLY! YES! OF COURSE! YES! CERTAINLY! YES! NATURALLY! YES...

RICHARD WAS A *FINE* MAN! WE SHALL SEE *NO FINER* IN *OUR TIME!*

MY... MY NAME *AGAIN!*

IT WAS *HARDLY* A MISTAKE, USING THAT NAME *THERE!* RICHARD BRALING! RICHARD BRALING! *HMMMM!* OPIUM! FLOWERS! *SIX DOZEN BRIGHT BLUE, RED, YELLOW, SUN-BRILLIANT FLOWERS LEAPED UP* FROM BEHIND THE COFFIN ON CONCEALED SPRINGS...

HELP!

IN LIFE, RICHARD BRALING WAS A CONNOISSEUR OF GREAT AND GOOD THINGS! HE SAVORED LIFE, AS ONE SAVORS OF A RARE WINE... HOLDING IT UPON THE LIPS...

A SMALL PANEL INSIDE THE BOX FLIPPED OPEN! A BRIGHT METAL ARM SNATCHED OUT! A NEEDLE STABBED RICHARD IN THE THORAX, SHOOTING HIM FULL OF COLORED LIQUID BEFORE HE COULD SEIZE IT.

EEEGH

A GROWING NUMBNESS! SUDDENLY RICHARD COULD NOT MOVE HIS FINGERS... OR HIS ARMS... OR TURN HIS HEAD! HIS LEGS WERE COLD AND LIMP! ANOTHER PANEL OPENED! METAL FORCEPS ISSUED FORTH ON STEEL ARMS! HIS LEFT WRIST WAS PIERCED BY A HUGE SUCKING NEEDLE...

MMMPH-H-H-H!

THIS TIME HE DID NOT SCREAM! HIS TONGUE WAS NOTIONLESS IN HIS ANAESTHETIZED MOUTH... A PUMP STARTED TO WORK! WHILE HIS BLOOD DRAINED OUT ONE SIDE OF HIS BODY, HIS RIGHT WRIST WAS PUNCTURED, HELD, A NEEDLE SHOVED INTO IT, AND THE SECOND PUMP BEGAN TO FORCE FORMALDEHYDE INTO HIM...

PSSST PSSST PSSST

PJOOM PJOOM

A SMALL MOTOR POPPED AND CHUGGED! THE ROOM DRIFTED BY ON EITHER SIDE OF HIM! LITTLE WHEELS REVOLVED! NO PALLBEARERS WERE NECESSARY! THE FLOWERS SWAYED AS THE CASKET ROLLED THROUGH THE FRENCH WINDOWS, INTO THE GARDEN...

NOW IT IS THE TIME WHEN WE MUST CONSIGN THIS PART OF THIS MAN TO THE *EARTH*...

CHUG CHUG

LITTLE SHINING SPADES LEAPED OUT OF THE SIDES OF THE CASKET! THEY BEGAN TO SIG! RICHARD SAW THE SPADES TOSS UP DIRT! THE COFFIN SETTLED... BUMPED... SETTLED... DUG... BUMPED AND SETTLED... DUG... BUMPED AND SETTLED...

ASHES TO ASHES... DUST TO DUST...

THE COFFIN WAS DEEP! THE MUSIC PLAYED! THE LAST THING RICHARD SRALINS SAW WAS THE SPACING ARMS OF THE SRALINS ECONOMY CASKET REACHING UP AND PULLING THE HOLE IN AFTER IT!

RICHARD SRALINS... RICHARD SRALINS... RICHARD SRALINS...

THE RECORD WAS STUCK! NOBODY HEARD! NOBODY WAS LISTENING...

HEH, HEH! AND THAT'S THE STORY, KIDDIES... *RAY BRADBURY'S* STORY! *LIKE* THIS *BRADBURY*? *LET ME KNOW!* THERE'S *MORE* OF HIS TALES HERE IN THE CRYPT! HEH, HEH! YEP, *OLD CHARLIE* MADE THE COFFIN FOR *RICHARD*... *NOT* FOR *HIMSELF!* I GUESS HE *KNEW* HIS GOOD-FOR-NOTHING KID BROTHER *VERY WELL!* AND NOW, IT'S TIME TO *CLOSE* THE *OLD WITCH'S* MAG! WE'LL *ALL* SEE YOU NEXT IN *MY* MESS, *TALES FROM THE CRYPT!* 'BYE, NOW!

The
Old Witch